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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001381

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S CENTER-RIGHT: A HOUSE DIVIDED

REF: A. 06 ANKARA 6626

[1](#)B. ISTANBUL 427

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, for Reasons 1.4 (b ,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. The eagerly anticipated merger of two center-right parties fizzled out over the weekend of June 2, running aground over mismanagement, mistrust, and massive egos. By bungling the merger, the two parties squandered the advantage they had to offer a viable alternative largely outside of Turkey's highly polarized political atmosphere. While all are trying to salvage something from the ashes, surveys present a dismal picture of a divided right doomed to another five years in political exile. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

True Path Waits at the Altar

[1](#)2. (C) Mehmet Agar's True Path Party (DYP) took the first step toward a merger with Erkan Mumcu's Motherland Party (ANAVATAN) at DYP's May 27 convention, when it adopted an historic name and new emblem derived from both parties' symbols (ref A). Agar's newly minted Democrat Party (DP), symbolized by a map of Turkey superimposed by a white horse facing west, claims a heritage dating back to the original Democrat Party of the 1950s (ref B), which ended in ignominy with the 1960 coup and hanging of its leader, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. A guest at the convention, Erkan Mumcu, described the rehabilitation of the DP moniker as the healing of a wound that had been bleeding for 47 years. Convention chairman Turan Arinc described it as a gift to the Turkish people, and Chairman Agar termed it the re-establishment of democracy cut short nearly half a century earlier.

[1](#)3. (C) DP laid the groundwork for the merger with ANAVATAN by authorizing its General Administrative Board to merge and increasing the number of board members. Prominent ANAVATAN members observed the proceedings. In his keynote speech, Agar knitted themes of Anatolian tradition and faith together with patriotic nationalism. He claimed that the Democrat Party would once again make Turkey a respected voice and not just an obedient tool. He described how the original DP had managed to rule the country in harmony, with its strong state tradition, desire to take part in the modern world, and

implementation of democracy (with the supplemental factor of secularism). He distanced the new DP from the country's current polarized politics and claimed that when DP comes to power, he would put things under control "in three months" and end terrorism in a year.

Motherland Gets Cold Feet

¶4. (U) Before ANAVATAN's June 2-3 convention, hints of a serious problem emerged upon reports that former prime minister and Motherland party chairman Mesut Yilmaz sought to run for parliament from his stronghold Rize on the DP ticket.

DP overtures to Yilmaz and his associates in ANAVATAN reportedly infuriated Mumcu, who convened a meeting of ANAVATAN's Central Decision Making and Administrative Board. Mumcu's assertion that Yilmaz is even less liked than terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan sidetracked party debates about the wisdom of the merger. Party Disciplinary Board Chairman Orhan Sahin said Mumcu had violated party disciplinary rules; others criticized Mumcu for comparing their former leader to a terrorist.

¶5. (U) After the board meeting, Mumcu complained to the media that DP had failed to set a date to make the merger official, and yet had asked ANAVATAN to close down. He noted that such a "merger" would be nothing but adherence to the DP. He aired his bitterness about Yilmaz and claimed, "This is against the spirit of our agreement: namely, that DP should have a new composition." He noted that if ANAVATAN could not reach agreement with DP, "both sides will wish each other good luck."

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¶6. (C) DP officials subsequently met with and assured ANAVATAN that any problems could be solved and claimed that, due to the election calendar, the convention and representation on the General Administrative Board (DP's body authorized to make decisions about candidate lists) could be resolved after the elections. They also expressed unease about Mumcu communicating through the media. ANAVATAN asked for stronger assurances on the organizational questions and objected to DP's inclusion of Yilmaz and his cohort. Mumcu and Agar spoke with their own officials, but Agar was reportedly too angry to meet directly with Mumcu.

¶7. (U) At the convention, a defensive Mumcu explained the reasons behind the crisis and said that "no one should try to present Erkan Mumcu as the scapegoat." He reminded that without establishing the legal framework, DP urged ANAVATAN to close down and join them.

The Left is the New Right

¶8. (C) The center-right merger's collapse has prompted numerous high-level resignations from ANAVATAN's old guard. ANAVATAN's Malatya provincial organization resigned as a whole in protest of Mumcu's remarks about Yilmaz. Edip Safter Gaydali, who has worked for unity on the right for years, told us he is furious and that "nothing will happen now on the right." He blamed both sides for political mismanagement and said the basic issue was "lack of confidence." Voters will not forgive the political leadership for their failure to unite, he predicted, adding, "the center-right will not exist after the elections." Indeed, a poll widely published June 4 showed DP (combined with ANAVATAN) scraping by with just 10.1 percent; other polls are less optimistic. Instead, disgruntled voters may turn to the nominally center-left Republican People's Party (CHP) -- Gaydali's new political home since resigning from ANAVATAN on June 1. Meanwhile, DP's Mehmet Agar is

consulting with populist Genc Party Chairman Cem Uzan.
ANAVATAN is rumored to be considering joining forces with the
Islamic right (either Felicity Party (SP) or Grand Unity
Party (BBP)). Mesut Yilmaz resigned from ANAVATAN on Monday
and may, in the end, run independently.

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